

History



In the late 1800's more than 14,000,000 pounds of mercury used for mining was lost in the Carson River drainage system. With the primary transport mechanism for mercury being water, mercury has remained in the sediments of the Carson River, including Lake Lahontan and terminal desert wetlands of the Carson Sink and Carson Lake. Also, much of the mercury remains in the surface soils at the mill sites, areas downstream from the mill sites and in the drainages that connect the mill sites to the Carson River.

About 130 mills in the Carson River watershed have contributed to mercury in surface soils. They extend from Carson City to east of Dayton, and from Silver City and Gold Hill through Six-Mile Canyon and Gold Hill Canyon down to the Carson River.



Who to contact

The NDEP works with developers and utilities to provide guidance for sampling of soils in the Carson River area. The Lyon County Building Department will act as a point of contact for local residents and advise those who obtain building permits in the area to contact the NDEP's Bureau of Corrective Actions before disturbing soils more than two feet below the surface. If you are unsure if this applies to you, please feel free to contact the NDEP's Bureau of Corrective Actions for assistance.

Nevada Division of Environmental Protection

Bureau of Corrective Actions
<http://ndep.nv.gov/mercury/index.htm>
(775) 687-9368

Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/>
(415) 947-8709

Lyon County

<http://www.lyon-county.org/>
(775) 463-6591

Nevada Department of Wildlife

<http://www.ndow.org/fish/health/index.shtm>
(775) 688-1500

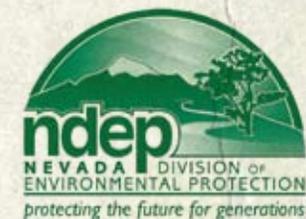


Carson River Mercury Site



Areas potentially impacted:

Former Comstock-Era gold mill sites and the Federal Emergency Management Agency 100 year flood plain of the Carson River and its tributaries, particularly the Dayton area.



The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) is working to identify and monitor potential risks to the public, as a result of mercury in soil.

Residents in the areas below who are considering or involved in activities which may disturb the soils deeper than two feet need to contact the NDEP. Activities may include building an addition to a house, or outbuilding, deck construction, a swimming pool, planting trees and public activities such as trenching for underground utilities and cables.

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Why is this important to you?



This area is listed on the Superfund National Priorities List. Superfund is the name given to an environmental program established to address abandoned hazardous waste sites. This area is included due to mercury from historic mining in the area.

Cleanup



Areas identified with mercury-contaminated surface soils underwent a cleanup process. The cleanup included the excavation of contaminated soils in the top two feet, offsite disposal of the soil, replacement of the contaminated soil with at least two feet of clean fill, grading and surface contouring.

Once cleanup conditions are met, commercial and residential developers within the cleanup area work with the NDEP to protect human health and the environment by sampling and demonstrating that the level of mercury in the top two feet of soil is at concentrations less than the health-based levels of concern. Soil below the top two feet has not been sampled and analyzed. Upon notification of an activity described above, the NDEP will determine if this soil should be tested.

Safety



Mercury can affect people's health through long-term, low-level exposure to mercury contaminated soil via ingestion. Children aged 1 – 6, who may inadvertently consume dirt while playing, are the most susceptible.

Wildlife



The Nevada State Health Division has issued health advisories recommending limits on consumption of fish species from six northern Nevada waters, due to elevated levels of methylmercury. The health advisories recommend no consumption of fish from Lahontan Reservoir and the Carson River from Dayton downstream to the reservoir.

